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The Clark County Seat

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The Clark County Seat

Clark County was first established in 1818, and therefore became one of the five counties in existence at the time Arkansas became a Territory in 1819. The centerpiece of Clark County government has always been its county courthouse. Historically, the county seat is the place where most citizens came into direct contact with government, whether it be to assess personal property, pay real estate taxes, obtain a marriage license, or register to vote.

Prior to the days of a permanent courthouse structure, court was held in several different locations. From 1819 to 1825, county business was conducted at the home of pioneer Jacob Barkman, along the Military Road and west of the Caddo River, not far from what is now Caddo Valley. After that, a place called Biscoeville served as the county seat. Biscoeville was approximately two miles up the Caddo River from Barkman's place. Then, the center of county government came to be at the home of Adam Stroud, about one mile east of present-day Hollywood. Here it remained until 1830.

Then, the county accepted an offer by Moses Collins to donate thirty acres of land along the Military Road about three miles west of Stroud's place as a site for a county seat. Here, at Greenville, Collins operated the county's first cotton gin-grist mill-sawmill with water power generated from damming Terre Noire Creek. The county built a courthouse and jail at Greenville. The courthouse was twenty-feet square, and the jail only fifteen-feet square. Both were made of logs.

During court sessions, the little village became crowded with people attending trials and conducting other business. Many prominent Arkansas lawyers of the day represented clients at Greenville, including men such as Albert Pike, Chester Ashley, Robert Crittenden, Grandison Royston, and future Arkansas governor Harris Flanagin.

In 1842 Arkadelphia became the permanent location of the county seat, and two years after that, a courthouse was constructed to house governmental operations. Greenville faded into oblivion, and today, there are no visible remains of the Greenville community or the county government's structures. In Arkadelphia, though, the 1840s structure survived the tumultuous years of the Civil War, and during Reconstruction large columns were added to the building. That courthouse served Clark County until the current facility was built in 1899.